

REMARKS

Applicants submit this Amendment in reply to the Office Action mailed April 10, 2006.

As an initial matter, Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of the allowability of the subject matter of claims 15-18 and 20. For various reasons, however, Applicants have not elected to place the subject matter of those claims in independent form at this time.

Applicants would also like to thank the Examiner for conducting an Examiner Interview with Applicants' representative on August 24, 2006. The substance of the interview is set forth in the following remarks.

By this Amendment, Applicants have amended claim 2 and added new claim 21. The originally-filed specification, drawings, and claims fully support the subject matter of amended claim 2 and new claim 21. No new matter has been introduced.

Before entry of this Amendment, claims 2-5 and 13-20 were pending in this application. After entry of this Amendment, claims 2-5 and 13-21 are pending in this application. Claim 2 is the sole independent claims.

On pages 2-4 of the Office Action, claims 2-5, 13, 14, and 19¹ were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,038,050 to Minoura et al. ("Minoura"). Applicants have amended independent claim 2 to include subject matter that was discussed during the Examiner Interview as not being disclosed by

¹ Claim 20 was listed as being rejected, however, the subject matter of claim 20 was not addressed on the merits in the rejection and were later indicated as containing allowable subject matter.

Minoura. The same is true for the subject matter of dependent claim 21. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the Section 102(b) rejection.

Applicants further submit that claims 3-5 and 13-21 depend from independent claim 2, and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons that independent claim 2 is allowable. In addition, at least some of the dependent claims recite unique combinations that are neither taught nor suggested by Minoura and therefore at least some also are separately patentable.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

In discussing the specification and claims in this Amendment it is to be understood that Applicants are in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicants are entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this Amendment and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: September 28, 2006

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